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STORY OF THE CONFERENCES.

North India Conference.

THE beginning of the story is that fifty-two years ago, the missionary society of the Methodist Episcopal Church made an appropriation of seven thousand dollars for opening a mission in India. Dr. Durbin, the Missionary Secretary, found it difficult to get a superintendent for the proposed mission; but near the close of 1855 the man was found, and on the 5th of January 1856, the Rev. Wm. Butler, of the New England Conference, was appointed by Bishop Simpson "Superintendent of the Mission about to be commenced in India." On the 9th of April 1856, the new superintendent with his family sailed from Boston for England and India, reaching Calcutta on the 25th of September 1856. His official instructions made it his duty "to select a field for the proposed mission, and make necessary preparation for carrying out the purpose of the missionary society." He was cordially welcomed to India by the missionaries at Calcutta and Benares from whom he received valuable information and practical suggestions concerning his work. He finally decided to plant the mission in a field almost unoccupied by other missions, and selected Oudh and that part of Rohilkand which lies between the Ganges and the Himalaya as the territory to be occupied by the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This territory is identical with the territory included within the boundaries of the North India Conference. This conference is territorially, and also on account of continued unbroken organization, the original India Mission. We recognise the men of other conferences as our brethren, but they are "separated brethren."

The city of Lucknow was Dr. Butler's first choice for head-quarters of the mission ; but a suitable house could not be found, and Bareli was selected. On his way northward he engaged his first Indian assistant, Mr. Joel Janvier, a gift from the American Presbyterian Mission, Fatehgarh ; and on the 7th of December, 1856, the party arrived at Bareli. On the 20th of February following the superintendent issued a circular to the residents of Bareli, announcing public worship every sabbath in the mission house at 11 A.M. in Hindustani and at 4 P.M. in English. Sunday, the 25th of February, 1857, is then the exact date of the formal commencement of our work in India ; and it is a significant fact that the first service was in the vernacular. A few weeks after work began in Bareli, the flames of mutiny and massacre swept over the plains of Oudh and Rohilkand ; the mission house at Bareli and all its contents were in ashes, and Dr. Butler with his family was a refugee at Naini Tal. One member of the native congregation had been killed, and the pastor, with his young wife, was making his difficult and dangerous way to her mother's home at Allahabad. On account of the interruption caused by the mutiny, Naini Tal claims to be our oldest station ; Lucknow comes next, as work was opened there early in the autumn of 1858 ; Moradabad comes next and Bareli follows.

With the exception of the North India Conference, all the conferences of Southern Asia are clearly of Providential origin. They have all grown and developed from small beginnings. When our work began in Bombay, Calcutta, Muttra, Madras, Rangoon and Singapur, no one said these places shall each become centres of annual conferences. It would not be correct to say that Providence had no hand in making the North India Conference ; nevertheless, Minerva-like, it sprang into existence from the brain of John P. Durbin and William Butler. They had beforehand decreed that such a conference there should be. Dr. Butler's first scheme for the India mission, presented to the missionary society

in March, 1857, provided for a force of twenty-five male missionaries occupying six central stations. Forty-nine years after this scheme was forwarded to New York, the report of the forty-second session of the North India Conference was published, showing that there were twenty male missionaries on the field, and, with one or two exceptions, occupying the stations mentioned in Dr. Butler's draft of March 10th, 1857.

The missionary society faithfully carried out the arrangements planned for planting the mission in India. Before the close of 1863, nineteen men and nineteen women, among whom were three unmarried ladies, had arrived from America. To this number must be added two families whom the superintendent selected in India.

It was in those days a journey of more than four months from America to India. Missionaries were told their appointments were for life, and most of those who went out had little hope of revisiting the home land. Under such circumstances an appointment to India was a more serious matter than it now is, and the story of the circumstances under which these men and women became missionaries, would make an interesting chapter in the record of God's ways with men. It was hardly an accident that four of the first twelve men appointed were from Allegheny College. The comparatively large number from Evanston is probably accounted for by the fact that in those days there were two returned missionaries among the faculty of the Garret Biblical Institute. Jesse T. Peck was Dr. Durbin's first choice for superintendent of the proposed India mission. Dr. Peck's physician forbade his coming to India; but his adopted daughter and her husband, with Dr. and Mrs. Humphrey, made up the first reinforcement which was so thankfully welcomed by Dr. Butler at Agra in March, 1858. In the meantime Dr. Peck had gone to the Pacific coast, and in a San Francisco hospital found a Madrassi sailor and gold digger, who afterwards became head-master of our first boys' school in Lucknow.

The first annual meeting of the mission was held in the Husainabad Chapel, Lucknow, in the early part of September, 1859, and immediately after the arrival of the second reinforcement from America. At this annual meeting missionaries were appointed to Lucknow, Shahjahanpur, Bareilly, Budaun, Moradabad, Bijnor and Naini Tal. During the next five years, that is, up to the time of our organization into an annual conference, eleven new missionaries arrived, and five new stations, *viz.*, Sitapur, Lakhimpur, Rae-Bareilly, Pilibhit and Sambhal were added to the list. Pauri, Gonda, Bahraich, Pithoragarh and Dwarahat were occupied later, making a total of sixteen stations for foreign missionaries. Our missionary force is now so much reduced that seven of these stations are without a permanent resident male missionary: two of the seven are, however, occupied by missionaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. Our corporate existence as an annual conference began, December 8th, 1864, in the mission school-house at Husainabad, Lucknow. Before receiving annual conference organization, the mission finances and all matters of administrative character were in the hands of the secretary at New York and the superintendent in India. Ecclesiastically, our position was one for which the Discipline made no provision. Annual conference organization restored to us the legal rights of Methodist preachers; it gave us a share in administration which inspired our zeal and satisfied our wishes. The estimates were now prepared by a committee of missionaries and read in open conference. Each man knew what money he might reasonably expect for his work and made his plans accordingly. It was an era in the life of the mission. On the 14th of December, 1864, Bishop Thomson read the appointments at the close of the first session of the India Mission Conference. There were three districts having an aggregate of fifteen circuits; and, with one exception, all the circuits were in charge of foreign missionaries. On the 9th of January, 1906,

Bishop Warne read the appointments at the close of the forty-second session of the North India Conference. There were nine districts and ninety-one circuits on his list, and only twelve of the ninety-one circuits were in charge of Europeans; the remaining seventy-nine circuits were in charge of natives of this country. The story of this conference is found in the difference between the two lists of appointments. Bishop Warne's list also included the names of thirty missionaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society who were assigned to stations in this conference. Concerning woman's work, it is recorded that the first unmarried woman sent by the Methodist Episcopal Church as a missionary to India, is still in this conference, and that two missionaries of this conference, when at home on furlough, had the principal share in organizing the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in America. The first two missionaries of that society were sent to this conference, and it is our boast that from the beginning until now there has always been perfect harmony between the two societies within the boundaries of the North India Conference; and it is only right to acknowledge our debt in this particular to the personal influence of the first missionary of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society whose body now rests in the Lucknow cemetery.

A short sketch of the Christian community we have gathered, and of the native ministry which has been raised up, and of the institutions we have established, will show what the conference is, what it has done, and what methods it has followed. The ideal convert is a person who has been intellectually convinced of the truth or of the superiority of the Christian faith, and, forsaking his ancestral faith, has become a Christian. There are possibly fifty such converts among our fifty thousand Christians; for these people have, in the main, been made Christians by other methods than that used by Christ with Nicodemus or at Jacob's well. We have received two or three thousand children into our orphanages;

these, with their children and grandchildren and relatives who have joined them, make up a considerable portion of our Christian community. Mass movements of an economic rather than religious character have brought the greater part of our Christians to us. Our Christians then are for the most part merely nominal Christians, like unconverted people at home. This condition of things is practically recognized by us in our frequent camp-meetings and other special services held for the purpose of bringing our Christian people to a personal knowledge of a personal Saviour.

Of our native ministers there are eighty men in the annual conference and five hundred and forty local preachers and exhorters, making a total working force of 620 Indians and 20 Europeans, just 31 natives to one foreigner. The story of the conference would be very incomplete if nothing were said of the Indian contingent. No one knows who first conceived the peculiar plan of hiring converts to evangelize their non-Christian countrymen. This pernicious system has obtained in India from the earliest establishment of Protestant missions. Dr. Butler found the system in operation in older missions, and seems to have assumed that this was the right way of doing the work ; and the rest of us have followed his lead. Occasionally some radical among us has protested that the system is a vicious one, and here and there efforts have been made to follow a different procedure ; but, generally speaking, this conference has tacitly assumed that India is to be converted by hired evangelists. In this we are like our neighbours. Even the National Indian Missionary Society proposes to follow the established procedure. So then we have from the first tried to develop a native ministry, and the figures given above show the result. We now have complete machinery for turning out the finished article. Boys in the orphanage and in the boarding-schools, on reaching a certain age and standing, are sent to the theological seminary, and when through the course are put at work on our

circuits. This is the procedure. It has been said that there are three kinds of ministers in the church : men-made, devil-sent, and God-called. Fortunately it is not the writer's duty to assign his ministerial brethren to their proper place in one or the other of these classes. Some there are among our native ministers who are making full proof of their calling and demonstrating that they are God-called. If the majority appear to be of the man-made class, our rather mechanical method of making preachers partly explains the phenomenon.

According to Methodist polity, men are elected to ministerial orders by vote of the Annual Conference, and as four-fifths of the members of the North India Conference are Indians, it follows that the native members of conference entirely control the election of men to orders—a condition of things which was not anticipated when it was first decided to admit native ministers to full ecclesiastical rights with missionaries. Furthermore, several of our districts are under Indian presiding elders. These men, having a seat in the cabinet, have a voice in making the appointments ; and consequently the missionaries of our conference receive their appointments partly at the hands of their native brethren—a peculiar condition of things, but the natural result of our policy concerning the native ministry. The extent to which the evangelistic and pastoral work of the conference has been placed in the hands of the native ministry is shown by the following figures. Of the nineteen foreign missionaries on the field in the year 1906, seventeen are in institutions, pastors of English congregations or in charge of districts. Each of the seventeen does more or less evangelistic work, but all have heavy responsibilities in other forms of work. The North India Conference is in fact a company of fourscore Indians and onescore of foreigners ; and all the foreigners except two are in institutional or departmental work.

The orphanages are our oldest institutions, and were opened in 1860, the girls' orphanage at Lucknow

and the boys' at Bareli. Three years later the boys were taken to Shahjahanpur and the girls to Bareli. These institutions have given us less financial anxiety than any other department of our work: the support of orphans specially appeals to the generosity of the home churches, and these institutions have always been very liberally dealt with by the societies which support them. There are generally about five hundred children in the two institutions; during the forty-five years of their maintenance the number admitted are counted by thousands. We have tried to make good Christians out of these orphans and have measurably succeeded. There have been a good many black sheep among them, and there have also been many who have become honoured and valuable members of the Christian community. We have also tried to give them a fair education; but the average of intellectual capacity is hardly equal to that of the boys and girls in other schools, and the scholastic achievements of our orphan schools have been rather moderate. We have also tried to develop manual labour departments in the orphanages, but have not been very successful. Nature's law is that if a man will not work neither shall he eat. But the average mission orphan believes that he will be fed whether he work or not, and it is not easy to make them work hard enough at any handicraft to make themselves good workmen. The general prejudice against manual labour which prevails among literary folk in India, shows itself in institutions called "orphanage schools"; and this prejudice has very seriously hindered our persistent efforts to make good mechanics of our boys. But since good mechanics now get better pay than low grade munshis, the manual labour department is likely to be more popular and more successful than hitherto it has been.

The story of our attempts to establish agricultural and manufacturing communities of native Christians naturally comes in here. There is an idea prevalent in missionary circles that converts should be taught

the arts of civilized life, and should be protected from loss on account of their change of faith. This idea, no doubt, had its origin in the supposition that non-Christian peoples are semi-barbarous and lawless communities. That such an idea should be applied to a highly civilized portion of the British Empire simply proves that missionaries, like other folk, are wedded to their own customs. Strange as it may appear, we have been obsessed by this idea, and four notable attempts have been made to carry it out, and not one of the four has been successful. The attempted colonization of Sikhs from Rohilkand in the Lakhimpur tarai failed because the climate was fatal to the colonists. The Bareilly manufactory became simply a place where skilled non-Christian workmen found employment, because Christian workmen were not to be found. The Moradabad Agricultural Loan Society and the Christian village of Panahpur. failed because the people could not or would not understand that the mission would enforce its financial claims against them. Panahpur is now a prosperous colony; and its prosperity dates from the time it ceased to be a mission enterprise.

Next to the orphanages, the press is the oldest of our conference institutions. A mission press is generally supposed to be a necessary part of a mission plant. In such places as Borneo and Fiji, the mission press is or has been a necessity. But why there should be mission presses in Lucknow, Calcutta, Madras and Bombay, is indeed a mystery; all we can say is, that such is the custom, and, like others, we have followed the beaten track. One of the missionaries in the reinforcement of 1859 was a practical printer, and this was taken to be providential in regard to a mission press. The press was first located in Bareilly and part of the building which is now the girls' orphanage school-house was built for the press. In 1866 the press was removed to Lucknow, and during forty years of activity has become the owner of real estate and plant worth more than three lakhs of rupees. The amount of

work it has done, makes a stupendous aggregate. In the year 1905 its earnings were fifty-six thousand rupees; but the real financial assistance which the press gives to our work is a small fraction of these figures. If the press property were capitalized, and invested, the income therefrom, together with the financial aid received from home, would be of far greater assistance in production and distribution of Christian literature than that which hitherto the press has been able to give. The *Indian Witness* owes its existence to the Lucknow Mission Press. The paper was started in 1871 by two Lucknow missionaries, one of whom was superintendent of the press; and during the first ten years of its existence it was published at Lucknow under the name of "Lucknow Witness." At the Bijnor session of our conference in January, 1868, it was resolved that "the Publishing Committee be instructed to issue a monthly paper in Roman-Urdu about the size of the *Missionary Advocate*." The "*Missionary Advocate*" disappeared a generation since, but the *Kaukab I Iswi*, now the *Kaukab I Hind*, still survives, and is now a weekly paper with a definite career and a definite place in the Indian Christian community. During the thirty-eight years of its existence the *Kaukab* has been edited by missionaries who have had more than full work apart from its editorship. That the paper has survived such treatment is proof that such a publication is needed. This annalist hopes for a day when the paper shall have an editor all to itself, and also confidently expects that the daily *Kaukab I Hind* will publish the transactions of the India Mission centenary in 1956.

At the second session of this conference in Moradabad, February, 1866, two missionaries were lodged in a small tent under a crooked date-palm in the Mission compound. The two men were old school-follows; one had just returned from a two years' visit to America, the other was in charge of the Lucknow schools, and had more than four hundred

boys in the central school at Husainabad. There was more talk than sleep in the little tent the first night, and somehow, before morning, the idea was conceived of establishing a college in Lucknow. Canning College had been opened a short time before, and it was supposed that without a college of our own, we could not keep up our schools. The college story has been recently published by a son of the man who did more than any of us to push the college scheme to completion ; for this reason it is not necessary to tell the story here. The fine building on Residency hill, with the professors and students who occupy its halls, declare the result of the plans conceived forty years ago:

Early in the year 1870, a high grade school for Christian girls was opened in Lucknow, not far from the place where the Woman's College now stands. The first two pupils of that school are now in mission work in the Panjab. Zauana schools for non-Christian girls and women had been opened several years before in Lucknow ; but this new school was entirely different. Whether the woman who opened the school had visions of a woman's college is not known to the writer ; but she lived to see her small day-school grow to a large boarding-school and finally into a college. The Woman's College was fortunate in this respect that the woman who first planned such an institution, was privileged to remain in charge of the work during all her life in India, and had the satisfaction of seeing the college in successful operation before untimely death removed her from our midst. This college has received more liberal support from home than any other institution of the conference. It has a larger number of missionaries on its staff than any other of our institutions. It has less competition than any other school. It always gets a large proportion of picked students for its classes. Having said these things concerning the unique advantages enjoyed by the college, what higher praise can be given it than to say that its success has been commensurate with its opportunity !

In early days there was much rivalry between Lucknow and Bareli, the two largest stations of the conference. When work was re-opened on the plains after the mutiny, Dr. Butler made Lucknow his head-quarters. A year or two later he shook off from his feet the dust of Lucknow and returned to Bareli. Since a bishop was to preside at the annual meeting of the mission in December, 1864, the superintendent wished the meeting to be held at Bareli, but the Lucknow party won the day, and the first session of our conference was held at Lucknow. This rivalry is noticed here because to it Bareli is indebted for the grand institution on which she prides herself, *viz.*, the Theological Seminary. When the college scheme was first devised, the young men who were pushing it fully intended that the college should be in Lucknow; but this part of the plan was not made prominent until the conference had formally decided to have a college. When the place for the proposed college had to be selected, the rivalry between Bareli and Lucknow again showed itself, and a vigorous effort was made to have the college located in Bareli; but here, again, Lucknow won the day. Now it so happened that one of the Bareli missionaries had subscribed one thousand rupees to the college, while most other missionaries in their poverty had given but one hundred each. When the Bareli man saw that the college was to be at Lucknow, he began to repent, and finally withdrew his subscription from the college, declaring that he intended having an institution at Bareli. His first plan was to make it an industrial school; but finally he decided for a Theological Seminary, of which he was for many years the president, and to which he personally contributed a large sum of money, besides securing generous donations from friends in America, from one of whom the central hall of the seminary received its name, the "Remington Hall." This seminary is now the representative institution of the conference. It is the chief source whence our indigenous ministry is derived. The

most remarkable feature of the school is that it feeds, clothes and instructs all its pupils free of cost to themselves. If Boston and Evanston and Drew should help ministerial candidates in this way, the effect upon the Church would be disastrous. Why the same result should not be looked for in India may possibly be explained by the fact, that it seems almost impossible for the missionary society to have dealings with native churches which are free from the taint of financial aid; and consequently, in a community where so many people in so many ways are proteges of the society, the help given to theological students seems to be according to the established order of things, and is comparatively harmless.

One of the first two missionaries of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was a medical missionary. Bareli was so fortunate as to be her chosen residence; and the princely munificence of the Nawab of Rampur gave the Bareli Medical Mission occupancy-right in a fine estate which enabled Dr. Swain and her successors to carry on a successful Zanana Medical Mission which has ministered to the relief of tens of thousands of sufferers, not only in Bareli itself but also in other stations of the mission.

Two European high grade schools in the hills, five anglo-vernacular high schools for boys and one for girls, together with a number of boarding-schools for boys and for girls about complete the list of our educational institutions. In regard to primary schools we are sadly deficient. Our educational work is like an inverted pyramid, broad at the top, very small near the ground. Thirty years ago we were spending more money on primary education than we now are. This has not been our accepted policy, but we have drifted into it. We have colleges and high schools, because a few missionaries were determined to have them. We are almost without primary schools, because it is not easy to secure the united action of ninety circuit superintendents. We had been at work twelve years before Sunday-schools for non-Christians were attempted. In 1871, a young mis-

sionary, fresh from city mission work in Chicago, saw a grand opportunity for Sunday-school work among the hundreds of non-Christian boys in the schools of Lucknow. He went at it with such zeal that at the close of the year more than one thousand non-Christian Sunday-school scholars marched with music and banners through the streets of Lucknow to the Sunday-school *fête* in Wingfield park. The example of Lucknow was everywhere followed, and for more than thirty years past, Sunday-schools for non-Christians have been an important part of the evangelistic work of the conference.

In the Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the chapter on district conferences was largely the work of delegates from this conference. Our own district conferences were the first to attain to the status of such organizations. When we consider the large membership of our nine district conferences, and the practical character of the work done by them, and also their close contact with the Christian community, we must acknowledge that these conferences, taken together, surpass the annual conference in importance and in practical results. The district conference organization also gives valuable assistance in planting new missions. The administrative difficulties which so hindered the progress of the India Mission in its earlier days would not have been experienced, if at that time the Church had possessed its present district conference scheme. Our large camp-meetings are the natural complement of the district conferences, and are now our most popular and effective evangelistic agencies. In proportion to the number of preachers now at work, there is less bazar preaching than formerly; meetings among Christians are taking the place of bazar preaching. This ought not so to be; the one should be done and the other ought not to be left undone. The preachers lose the drill and the inspiration of bazar preaching, the aggressive character of the mission disappears, and we lose touch with the non-Christian multitudes.

This conference has not distinguished itself in the field of oriental scholarship. No one of the foreign or native members is an authority on Indian philosophy, ethnology, philology or theology; neither have we among us any who prominently stand forth as polemic Christian theologians, authoritative expounders of Christian doctrine. The fact is put on record here as a warning to the men of the coming half century, and with the hope that our centennial annalist will be able to make a more gratifying record of the scholarship of the conference.

The North India Conference is noted for the harmony which has always prevailed within its borders. We have lived and wrought in peace with one another. The conference has gradually grown from a company of three or four men up to its present dimensions; and, like all growths, the various members mutually adjust themselves to one another and friction is unknown. Among other reasons for the prevailing harmony in the conference is the fact that for many years it was under the leadership of two very capable men who were men of peace, staunch friends, as free from personal jealousy as it is possible for men to be, both born leaders, both intensely in earnest, and yet nearly always agreeing in policy and plans for work. Writing to Dr. James Mudge concerning Mudge's article on the India Mission, which appeared in the *Methodist Review*, Bishop Thoburn says:—"I am especially pleased with the attention you have given the good and great work done by Bishop Parker. If I have succeeded in doing anything at all, it was more largely due to the help of E. W. Parker than to any other cause, or perhaps all other causes combined." A conference led by such men could scarcely fail of being a company among whom brotherly kindness always prevailed.

What shall the future of the Conference be? Our future depends partly upon our own zeal and fidelity, and partly upon the help we may receive from the Church which planted this mission here. The North India Conference has suffered serious loss on account

of the great expansion of the work of the missionary society in India and elsewhere. Fields that were cleared and sown during the first two decades have reverted to jungle during the last three. The church is of course at liberty to choose where her missions shall be located. But when plans for work in Oudh and Rohilkand were adopted and made public, there was an implied promise to carry out those plans to a reasonable degree of completion. We missionaries have been disappointed, our Indian brethren have been disappointed, and in many places Hindus and Mahommedans have been disappointed, because the promises of the early days have not been fulfilled. Concerning our ultimate success, we believed that "Jesus shall reign where'er the sun doth his unwearied journeys run." We sympathize with those whose watchword is the evangelization of India in this generation, yet we know that such a thing is impossible. There is no other land under the sun so difficult to win for Christ as India, and there is no other land which in the intellectual and religious endowments of its inhabitants promises such an abundant harvest as does India. We know that one hundred years of mission work have made scarcely any impression upon the great non-Christian faiths of India. But the irresistible tide of human events moves towards the goal for which we are striving. "The stars in their courses fight for us." We shall succeed ; but the end is not yet—
Hanoz Delhi dūr ast.

J. H. MESSMORE.